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Mercer Vies To Be Site For Ag Center

Mercer County and Nelson County are the finalists and the prize is worth fighting for a Kentucky Agriculture Heritage Center which would be the only one in Kentucky and one of only about 10 in the nation. The Mercer County Fiscal Court let its support be known Tuesday by voting to contribute \$100,000 per year for five years toward the construction cost of the center and to work to get sewer service to the local proposed site.

Bruce Harper, executive director, and Harvey Mitchell, chairman of the board which has been studying the proposal, told the court members that there has been talk about an agriculture museum for about 30 years, but in 2001, the Kentucky House of Representatives passed a resolution saying there should be one in Kentucky. The resolution didn't say how it would be funded. For the past year and a half, meetings have been held to bring the heritage center closer to reality. Mitchell said meetings about the center have involved over 50 agricultural organizations in the state and all have been supportive. Ralph Anderson of Anderson Circle Farm funded a study and 14 people were named to a board of directors and 30 to an advisory board for the center.

Anderson has also agreed to donate 30 acres at the corner of U.S. 127 North and Munday's Landing Road for the center. A house, known as the Keller Home Place, a barn and stable are on the site and could be used for educational purposes to compliment the ag center, Mitchell said. Anderson's donation of the site represents a \$750,000 gift plus access to Anderson Circle Farms.

The catch at the moment is to have the 10-member selection committee choose Mercer over Nelson County. All counties were given an opportunity to submit a proposal. Seven did so and the choice has been narrowed to the two counties. The site selection committee will visit both sites Tuesday and weigh what each county has to offer, or is willing to do to get the center. A decision is expected to be announced about Aug. 24, perhaps at the Kentucky State Fair.

(See complete story by Debbie Jenkins Cook in the July 27, 2006 issue of The Harrodsburg Herald).